

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

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CINCPAC HONOLULU HI
AMEMBASSY JAKARTA
AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR
AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE
CINCPACREPPH SUBIC BAY RP
AMEMBASSY SUVA

C O N F I D E N T I A L MANILA 09508

E.O. 11652
TAGS: ELAB, RP
SUBJECT: GOP NOT TO SEEK RESTORATION OF THE RIGHT TO
- STRIKE

REF: MANILA 9113

1. SUMMARY: LABOR SECRETARY OPLE HAS TOLD LABATT THAT THE GOP WILL NOT SEEK A RESTORATION OF THE RIGHT TO STRIKE BECAUSE SUBVERSIVES USE SUCH STRIKES AS A DEVICE TO ATTACK THE GOVERNMENT. HE CITED A RECENT STRIKE AT RIVERSIDE MILLS THAT RESULTED IN 12 LOCAL UNION OFFICERS BEING JAILED FOR SUBVERSIVE ACTIVITIES. REPRESENTATIVES OF LABOR IN THE NEW PARLIAMENT APPEAR COMMITTED TO PROPOSE LEGISLATION TO END THE STRIKE BAN EVEN THOUGH CHANCES FOR ADOPTION APPEAR SLIM. LABOR PARLIAMENTARIANS CAN ALSO BE EXPECTED TO PUSH FOR A WORKERS BANK, URBAN LOW-COST HOUSING AND SOME KIND OF MECHANISM TIEING WAGES TO THE COST
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OF LIVING. END SUMMARY.
2. LABOR SECRETARY BLAS OPLE ON JUNE 5 TOLD LABATT THAT, COUNTING HIMSELF, THERE WERE 10 REPRESENTATIVES OF LABOR IN THE NEW PARLIAMENT. HE HAD NOT CONVENED THE LABOR BLOCK NOR HAD HE YET THOUGHT OUT THE SPECIFICS OF THE POLITICAL ROLE THEY SHOULD SEEK TO PLAY IN THE PARLIAMENT. HE HAD SOME RECENT LEGISLATION THAT HE THOUGHT WAS TOO

IMPORTANT TO RISK ON AN UNTESTED PARLIAMENT SO HE PUSHED IT THROUGH THE PRESIDENT. HE WAS REFERRING TO THE RECENT MINIMUM WAGE DECREE (REF TEL) AND EFFORTS TO MODIFY THE NO STRIKE PROVISION OF THE LAW. "BEYOND MAKING CHANGES TO EXPEDITE ARBITRATION," OPLE SAID, "WE DON'T INTEND TO CHANGE THE NO STRIKE PROVISION OF THE LAW. WE RECOGNIZE THAT IN STRONGER, DEVELOPED COUNTRIES, SUCH AS AMERICA AND IN EUROPE, THE FREEDOM TO STRIKE IS ESSENTIAL TO COLLECTIVE BARGAINING. HOWEVER, IN FRAGILE DEVELOPING COUNTRIES SUBVERSIVES USE COLLECTIVE BARGAINING STRIKES TO ATTACK THE GOVERNMENT." AS AN EXAMPLE HE CITED THE THREE-DAY STRIKE OF 4,000 FEDERATION OF FREE WORKERS (FFW) AT RIVERSIDE MILLS IN MARCH. HE ADDED, "WE HAVE NO OBJECTION TO STRIKES OVER ECONOMIC ISSUES; BUT WHEN PICKETS CARRY SIGNS CONDEMNING THE GOVERNMENT, IT IS NO LONGER ECONOMIC, BUT POLITICAL." OPLE SAID THAT TWELVE OFFICERS OF THE FFW UNION WERE ARRESTED ON ORDERS FROM SECRETARY OF DEFENSE ENRILE AND WERE CHARGED WITH BEING SUBVERSIVES. HE VOLUNTEERED THAT JOHNNIE TAN, PRESIDENT OF THE FFW, WAS SEEKING HIS SUPPORT IN OBTAINING THE RELEASE OF THESE OFFICERS. OPLE SAID HE ASKED TAN TO GIVE HIM THE NAMES OF THOSE OFFICERS WHO WERE CLEAN, AND HE WOULD GO TO BAT FOR THEM.

3. "WE HAVE," OPLE ADDED, "TAKEN STEPS TO ALTER OUR ARBITRATION AND CONCILIATION PROCEDURES SO AS TO EXPEDITE
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SOLUTION TO DISPUTES, AND THAT IS AS FAR AS WE ARE PREPARED TO GO AT THIS TIME. FROM NOW ON, THERE WILL BE NO APPEALS OF THE DECISIONS OF THE NATIONAL LABOR RELATIONS COMMISSION BEYOND THE SECRETARY OF LABOR."

4. COMMENT: OPLE WAS NOT COMPLETELY FORTHCOMING ABOUT THE POLITICAL ROLE OF LABOR IN THE PARLIAMENT. WE KNOW OF AT LEAST TWO MEETINGS OF THE REPRESENTATIVES OF LABOR, AND ONE MORE MEETING IS SCHEDULED FOR SOME TIME THIS WEEK. ALL OF THE REPRESENTATIVES OF LABOR CAMPAIGNED FOR THE REMOVAL OF THE BAN ON THE RIGHT TO STRIKE. THUS THEY WOULD APPEAR COMMITTED TO PROPOSE LEGISLATION TO THAT END, REGARDLESS OF WHAT SECRETARY OPLE THINKS AND EVEN THOUGH CHANCES FOR ADOPTION APPEAR SLIM. KBL MEMBERS WILL HAVE TO BE EXCEPTIONALLY CLEVER AND ADROIT TO OUTRIGHT OPPOSE AN ACCOMMODATION FOR LABOR'S DEMAND FOR A CHANGE IN THE BAN ON STRIKES. DURING THE CAMPAIGN, INDUSTRY SECRETARY PATERNO, AS A CANDIDATE, SPOKE OF THE NEED TO GRADUALLY RESTORE THE RIGHT TO STRIKE. OTHER ISSUES THE REPRESENTATIVES OF LABOR CAN BE EXPECTED TO PUSH FOR ARE ESTABLISHING A WORKERS BANK, AN URBAN WORKERS LOW-COST HOUSING PROGRAM, AND SOME KIND OF MECHANISM TO TIE WAGES TO THE

COST OF LIVING. MURPHY

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